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Recognition for Hotel Punta Islita at the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards 2010

Hotel Punta Islita has won the Best Accommodation for Local Communities category at this year's Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards organized by responsibletravel.com.



At a ceremony hosted at World Travel Market (WTM), London, on Wednesday 10th November, the Awards were handed out by Justin Francis, managing director of responsibletravel.com, organizers and founders of the Awards, and Amanda Wills, managing director of Virgin Holidays, headline sponsor of the Awards. The Judges commended Hotel Punta Islita for its synergistic relationship with its local neighbors by providing professional and entrepreneurial opportunities that have helped to reverse urban migration. The Islita Art Museum initiative was singled out for its innovative approach, using art and creativity to strengthen an entire community's self-confidence and self-reliance.

Justin Francis, founder of The Responsible Tourism Awards and managing director, responsibletravel.com, organizers of the Awards said:

"This year I have been heartened by the depth of commitment and connection our winners have shown to the local communities in their destinations. Their successes and pioneering spirits are remarkable and the very real and authentic experiences they have created, set responsible tourism apart."

Hotel Punta Islita's President, Mr. Harry Zurcher commented:

"Costa Rica's long-standing tradition of peace and solidarity inspire the creation of successful development models that fully harmonize natural resource stewardship and human welfare. We celebrate this recognition as we express our deepest gratitude for the collective contributions that have made it possible. Our community's drive, our staff's dedication, and the unwavering support of NGO's, foundations, like-minded corporations, friends, and associates inspires us to envision an ever-evolving Islita. Brighter, healthier, and infinitely prosperous."

Amanda Wills, managing director, Virgin Holidays, headline sponsor of the Awards said:

"I'm once again humbled by the commitment, drive and ingenuity of today's winners. They have shown us all what can be achieved by the people and places seeking to benefit from tourism, even when the economic climate continues to challenge us all. Their's is truly an example for the rest of the industry to follow, and I'm delighted that Virgin Holidays is again able to be a part of this celebration."

Launched in 2004, the Awards are run in association with partners World Travel Market, Metro Newspaper and Geographical Magazine.

For a full list of finalists, see www.responsibletourismawards.com

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Notes to editors

About Hotel Punta Islita and Grupo Islita

Hotel Punta Islita is the flagship property of Grupo Islita, a Costa Rican developer and manager of upscale destinations characterized by a planet-friendly, people-positive responsible tourism model. Its two properties, Hotel Punta Islita (www.hotelpuntaislita.com) and El Silencio Lodge & Spa (www.elsilenciolodge.com) respectively feature the best of Costa Rica's sunny beaches and mystical cloud forests.

For interviews, images or further information please contact Maria Barquero, Outreach Manager, Grupo Islita: outreach@grupoislita.com / +506 8842/6870 / +001 202 470-0979

About The Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards

The Awards are the most prestigious and competitive of their kind in the world and are collaboration between online travel directory responsibletourism.com; UK media partners Metro Newspaper and Geographical Magazine and World Travel Market who host the ceremony. The central tenet of the Awards is that all types of tourism - from niche to mainstream - can and should be operated in a way that respects and benefits destinations and local people.